

REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health,

FOR THE

WEST DEAN RURAL DISTRICT,

For the Year ending December 31st, 1897.



The West Dean Rural District is composed of the four divisions, West Dean, Newland, English Bicknor, and Staunton, and has a total area of 21,609 acres, and contains a population of 12,711, calculated up to the middle of 1897, from the numbers of the last census,

The births registered during the year numbered 417, viz. 215 males and 202 females, which is a decrease of 14 males and 5 females or 19 in all, from the number of the previous year.

The deaths registered numbered 194, which is a decrease of 11 as compared with the preceding year. This gives a general death rate of 15.2 per thousand, *i.e.*, a decrease of 1.1 per thousand as compared with 1896, when the general death rate was 16.3 per *mille*.

Zymotic disease was registered as the cause of death in 18 cases, viz., 2 of Diphtheria and 16 of Measles.

Thirteen cases were reported under the Infectious Disease Notification Act, viz., in February, 1 case of Diphtheria, and one of Scarlatina. The case of Diphtheria probably arose from defective surroundings, *e.g.*, ash pit collection, want of ventilation and trapping of drains, these were remedied and no further cases arose in the locality. The case of Scarlatina was in all probability contracted outside the district. In July another case of Scarlatina was reported, but in a remote part of the district from the last, and in this case the contagion was in all probability introduced into the district.

In July and August an outbreak of Diphtheria occurred in a collection of cottages at Broadwell Lane End, 5 cases in all were reported. A thorough inspection of the sources of supply of both milk and water showed conclusively that neither of these were to blame, so it was evidently due to some local cause, the privies of the houses were foul from want of systematic emptying and cleaning, some of the houses had collections of fermentable vegetable matter in receptacles near the door, used for feeding pigs, and some of the gardens in which the children played had shallow pits, into which the house refuse was thrown. Anyone of these would act as fertile grounds for the growth of microbic poisons, and the children would be rendered all the more susceptible by the undrained and consequently damp state of the school yard which they frequented. All these defects were remedied, and by September the outbreak had completely subsided. In these cottages the difficulties of complete isolation are great owing to the limited accommodation.

The cases of Erysipelas occurred at various seasons, and in various parts of the district, and no deduction as to cause can be made.

Measles was very prevalent both in the Spring and the Autumn, in parts of the West Dean and Staunton Divisions, necessitating the closure of the Ellwood Schools in February and again in May, the Redbrook Schools in June and November; the Pillowell and Bream Schools in April, and the Clearwell Schools in June. It is only when this affection has assumed an epidemic form, and has affected a certain percentage of the scholars that this measure is taken, and which is the only means of checking a further extension, as in this district the Schools are the great places for the congregation of the children, at home they only meet in small numbers, and many live in isolated cottages.

The drainage of the district is by means of privies, middens, and in some cases cesspits, no system of sewerage exits, and even if contemplated, could only be carried out in limited areas of the district.

The water supply is by wells, tanks for collecting rain water, and springs, no serious contamination was detected at anytime, but the exposed condition of the springs renders this possible. In dry seasons the want of more storage must be keenly felt.

I would recommend that a more strict form of sewage disposal be enforced, viz.—the regular and frequent cleaning out of privies, the increase of properly constructed cesspits, instead of the careless manner of using a part of the garden, close to the house entrance, as a midden,

The water supply ought to be increased in every available way, by means of storage tanks and the sinking of wells, and the protection of springs from contamination.

The erection of houses should only be permitted when all the details of water supply and sewage disposal have been properly planned, and where the situation is dry and proper ventilation and accommodation provided for.

MALCOLM POIGNAND, M.D.

Medical Officer of Health.

(A)

TABLE OF DEATHS during the Year 1897, in the WEST DEAN RURAL DISTRICT, classified according to DISEASES, AGES, and LOCALITIES.

NAMES OF LOCALITIES adopted for the purpose of these Statistics; pub- lic Institutions being shown as separate lo- calities.	Mortality from all causes at subjoined Ages.							Mortality from subjoined causes, distinguishing Deaths of Children under Five Years of Age.																									
	At all ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and up- wards.	(i)	1	2	3	4	FEBRILES.								10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
													Typhus.	Enteric or Typhoid.	Continued.	Relapsing.	Puerperal.	Cholera.	Erysipelas.	Measles.													
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22			
West Dean Newland English Bicknor Staunton	194	59	23	7	6	45	54	Under 5 5 upw'ds			2									10	4	2		2	1	13	19	5	1	8	51	81	
TOTALS ...	194	59	23	7	6	45	54	Under 5 5 upw'ds			2									10	4	2	2	1	13	19	5	1	8	51	81		

